The Girl Who Spun Gold by Leo & Diane Dillon

A Fine Example Of Childrens Literature!

A lovely peasant girl named Quashiba is spinning thread and laughing with her mama one day when young Big King comes riding through the trees, wondering what all the noise is about. Quashiba’s quick-thinking, fast-talking mama tells a terrible fib. Oh, great Big King, my daughter is spinning a whole field of finest golden thread to make cloth for his Highest. And we are so happy, we are rejoicing about it, dont cha know. And before Quashiba knows what’s happening, Big King decides that he must have her as his queen so that she may spin him rooms full of golden thread. In despair, Quashiba agrees to a near-impossible bargain with a demonic, pointy-toothed little imp who shows up, promising to help her make the golden things. The universal Litmahn folktale has many variants around the world, including the best-known German version, Rumpelstiltskin. In this West Indian version, the award-winning team of Virginia Hamilton and Leo and Diane Dillon, who, among them, have received the National Book Award, the Newbery Medal, three Newbery Honors, the Coretta Scott King Award, two Caldecott Medals, and many others, has created a spectacularly beautiful and delightful rendering of the favorite tale. Hamilton translates the language into a lilting colloquial style, perfect for reading aloud, while the Dillons use metallic paint and gold leaf to produce stunning, frame-worthy paintings replete with patterns, textures, and lavish colors. In a charming, strong-woman twist, the story concludes with Quashiba demanding (and her husband giving) an apology for his greedy, unfair behavior, and the two of them live fairly happily ever after. (Ages 5 to 8) -- Emilie Coulter

My Personal Review:
WARNING: SPOILERS TO FOLLOW Quashiba finds herself in a precarious situation. Due to a slight untruth told by her mother to a visiting king, the young lady is forced to marry to king with the promise that she can weave fine golden cloth. Though she is attended by handmaidens and receives her every want, her new husband demands that she come through with her mother’s promise after they are married one year and a day. The time arrives and the girl knows not what to do. A little man with a wooden leg, a tail and wearing striped trousers magically appears one evening. He offers to help her make the fabric but with a price for his assistance: she has three nights and three chances per night to guess his name; if she doesn’t, she will be his tiny companion forever.
After two days of successfully presenting the golden thread to her spouse, as well of two days of unsuccessfully guessing the little man’s name, the Quashiba feels impending doom. However, during dinner, her husband tells of his unusual encounter with a little man named Litmanhn Bittyun.

Quashiba is relieved and that evening when the little man comes, she toys with him with two fake names, finally announcing his real name.

The sprite storms off and is never seen again. Knowledgeable readers will automatically see the similarity between this tale and the European ?Rumplestiltskin?. The books illustrations are vivid and thought-provoking, making this book a KO for the primary classroom, combining fantasy, familial relationships, and effective use of dialect/language. The late Hamilton has scored another winner that will embellish the home as well as the classroom.

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